

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET

04 July 2023

Report of the Chief Executive

Part 1- Public

Executive Non Key Decisions

1 TONBRIDGE & MALLING UK SHARED PROSPERITY FUND (UKSPF)

This report provides an update on delivery during Year 1 of the Tonbridge & Malling UKSPF Programme (including Rural England Prosperity Fund) and highlights upcoming initiatives for Year 2.

1.1 Background:

- 1.1.1 In April 2022, the council was provisionally allocated £1m for the period up to March 2025 to go towards projects that supported the government's Levelling Up agenda. The Levelling Up agenda is a national plan aimed at delivering a wider range of socio-economic initiatives aimed at spreading opportunity and prosperity to all parts of the country.
- 1.1.2 In order to access the first year of funding for this programme, the council was required to pull together an Investment Plan setting out how the funding would be spent. Following both internal discussion and engagement with external partner organisations and MPs, an Investment Plan was produced which addressed the three programme priorities of 'Communities and Place', 'Local Business Investment' and 'People and Skills'.
- 1.1.3 With Cabinet having approved the Tonbridge and Malling UKSPF Investment Plan in July 2022, it was submitted to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) shortly thereafter. Having indicated that investment plans would be approved 'from October 2022 onwards' it was not until just before Christmas 2022 that confirmation came that the T&M investment Plan had been approved and that the council had been successful in unlocking its Year 1 funding allocation. Funding for Years 2 and 3 are dependent on successful delivery in previous years.

The Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) is treated by Government as an addendum to UKSPF Investment Plans, with allocations being awarded to only those areas of the country that are predominantly rural in nature. With Cabinet having approved the submission of the addendum in November 2022, the council received the good news that the capital funding had been approved for this

initiative in May 2023. Work is now underway to bring a programme of rural grants into implementation that will run until March 2025.

1.2 UKSPF Year 1 Delivery (2022/23)

1.2.1 Despite only receiving confirmation of the funding allocation in December 2022, the council had undertaken considerable work in order to ensure that we were able to respond quickly. The Year 1 projects had been identified and progressed as far as practicable before confirmation was received. These projects were:

- **Youth Provision** – Diversionary activities to reduce ASB amongst young people. Allocation of £7,500 (revenue)
- **Mobile CCTV** – Purchase and installation of mobile cameras to tackle ASB. Allocation of £20,000 (capital) and £5,000 (revenue)
- **Tonbridge Wayfinding** – Improvements to legibility of Tonbridge Centre through artistic wayfinding. Allocation of £24,731 (capital) and £1,500 (revenue)
- **Tonbridge Town Centre Review** – Development of regeneration plans for Tonbridge Town Centre. Allocation of £20,000 (revenue)
- **Carbon Descent Plans** – Plans to reduce carbon footprint of leisure centres. Allocation of £12,000 (revenue)
- **Shopfront and Vacant Unit Improvement Programme** – Advice service and grants to support applicants. Allocation of £3,500 (revenue)
- **West Kent Business Support Programme** – Advice and micro-grants to support small business. Allocation of £4,500 (revenue)

2022/23 Total - £98,731

1.2.2 Achievements during the course of 2022/23 have been:

- **Youth Initiatives** - three separate commissions (EMBER Trust, KCC Early Help and Salus) resulting in diversionary activities for young people undertaken in areas of deprivation. Year 1 budget spent and activity being planned for 2023/24.
- **Mobile CCTV** – 4 CCTV cameras purchased. Some revenue associated with moving cameras to various hotspots spent, but remainder will be spent in early 2023/24.
- **Tonbridge Wayfinding** - Artist Guy Portelli commissioned and £9,800 capital sent so far on materials. Running behind profile due to delay in negotiations with Network Rail/Southeastern.

- **Tonbridge Town Centre** - considerable progress made on Phase 2 of the town centre regeneration plans. Budget spent for 2022/23 and on track to spend the 2023/24 allocation in mid-2023.
- **Carbon Descent Plans** - reports on Larkfield Leisure Centre and Tonbridge Swimming Pool completed and 2022/23 budget spent.
- **Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme** - Let's Do Business Group commissioned and provided advice service for applicants. First call closed on 08 March 2023. Revenue budget in 2022/23 spent. Grant Offer Letters sent to 18 successful applicants who have until end of 2023/24 to deliver their improvements.
- **WK Business Support Programme** - Gemteq Ltd (Smarter Society) commissioned and setting up the programme. 29 expressions of interest from West Kent businesses collated within Year 1.

2022/23 Total Spent - £75,094 (76% of Year 1 budget)

1.2.3 With over three-quarters of the Year 1 budget spent in the period of three months from January to March 2023, DLUHC has been satisfied that sufficient progress has been made to carry forward Year 1 underspend and unlock Year 2 funding. In the end of year return to DLUHC, as well as information about progress to date, it was proposed that the remaining Year 1 budget be carried over into Year 2 as follows:

- **Youth Initiatives** – Carry forward of £3 (revenue)
- **Tonbridge Wayfinding** – Carry forward of £14,134 (capital)
- **Mobile CCTV** – Carry forward of £5,000 (revenue)
- **WK Business Support Programme** – Carry forward of £4,500 (revenue) which was subsequently spent in April 2023.

1.2.4 In addition to internal Project Leads meetings, which have taken place on a bi-monthly basis, a Local Group comprising key partner organisations (which is a requirement of the UKSPF funding) has met on a 4-monthly basis. The aim of this group is to act as an advisory group - providing advice, support and expert knowledge in the delivery of the programme. As well as TMBC, this group has membership from the Department for Work and Pensions, Kent County Council, Tonbridge Town Team, Kent Community Foundation, Clarion Futures, Mid Kent College, North Kent College, Royal British Legion Industries and the West Kent Partnership. The slide pack for the 11 May 2023 meeting has been provided in **Appendix 1** for your information.

1.3 UKSPF Year 2 Development and Implementation

1.3.1 A number of Year 2 projects are continuation projects from Year 1 – Youth Provision (£20,000 revenue); Mobile CCTV (£5,000 revenue); Tonbridge Town Centre Review (£20,000); Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme (£10,000 capital and £1,500 revenue) and West Kent Business Support Programme (£25,000 revenue). However, there are a number of new projects:

- Digital Information Boards – allocation of £40,000 (capital) – site visits for potential locations have been undertaken, and feedback has been sought from the Local Group about possible uses for the boards.
- Living Bus Shelter Roofs Pilot – allocation of £30,000 (capital) – discussions have commenced with Clear Channel and a site within Tonbridge Town Centre has been identified for the pilot.
- Green Business Grant Scheme – allocation of £10,000 (capital) and £2,000 (revenue) from the UKSPF, with an additional c.£35,000 from the Business Rates Retention Pilot. Sevenoaks District Council has also allocated some UKSPF to this initiative and as such applicants from Sevenoaks District can apply. With the details having been approved by Cabinet in March 2023, a new round closed on 31 May 2023. 16 applications were received.
- Community Development Grant Scheme – allocation of £33,962 (revenue). With the details having been approved by Cabinet in April 2023, this scheme launched on 21 April 2023 and the first call for applications closed on 16 June 2023.

2023/24 Total - £197,462 plus Year 1 carry forward of £23,637 = £221,099

1.3.2 The deadline for the next return to DLUHC will be 01 August 2023, which will set out progress for the first quarter of 2023/24.

1.3.3 As agreed at Cabinet in November 2022, having secured the REPF funding allocation, the council is now progressing with establishing a West Kent Rural Grants Programme in line with addendum submission.

1.3.4 As part of this programme, all funding allocated to the council will be ring-fenced for projects within our borough. Rural Business and Communities will be able to apply for capital grants of up to £25,000, with applications being initially assessed by officers and recommendations made to a panel comprising:

- A Cabinet Member representative from each Local Authority (SDC, TMBC and TWBC)
- Rural Business Representatives
- Produced in Kent
- Kent Downs & High Weald AONBs
- National Farmers Union

- National Trust
- Hadlow College

1.3.5 Action with Rural Communities in Kent had also initially been on the list for inclusion, but they unfortunately closed in December 2022.

1.3.6 Given the sustainability and economic development emphasis of the fund, it is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property represents the borough council on this panel.

1.4 Legal Implications

1.4.1 The matters raised in this report are considered to be routine, uncontroversial or not legally complex and a legal opinion has not been sought on these proposals.

1.5 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.5.1 None arising directly from this report.

1.6 Risk Assessment

1.6.1 A Risk Assessment has been undertaken for the programme which identifies a number of potential hazards and control measures to mitigate their impact. This Risk Assessment is provided as **Appendix 2**.

1.7 Policy Considerations

1.7.1 Business Continuity/Resilience

1.7.2 Communications

1.7.3 Communities

1.7.4 Planning and Housing

1.7.5 Environment

1.7.6 Economy

1.8 Recommendations

1.8.1 That the report **BE NOTED**.

1.8.2 That the delegation of decision-making powers to the West Kent Rural Grants Programme Panel as set out in 1.3.4 **BE AGREED**.

1.8.3 That the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Regeneration and Property **BE AGREED** as the representative for the Council on the West Kent Rural Grants Programme Panel.

1.8.4 That the Risk Assessment for the UKSPF Programme as set out in **Appendix 2**
BE ENDORSED.

Background papers:

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